The European Forum on Urban Forestry (EFUF) is a gathering for practitioners, policymakers, scientists and managers who are active in the field of urban forestry, as well as urban greening and green infrastructure. EFUF emphasizes the connection of scientific knowledge and practice for delivering healthy and sustainable cities.

Major changes in society and an increased level of urbanization have led to a call for structural changes in forest management. Urban forestry has gained international attention due to both its environmental benefits and its relevance for the health and well-being of urban citizens. Urban forests are vibrant places for multifaceted recreational activities, social gathering and mental restoration.

“EFUF plays a key role in the transfer of skills and knowledge between European countries. The reality is that there is a real danger that good practice learnt in one corner of Europe remains there and is not shared. As a network EFUF allows for good practice to be shared widely and has been doing so successfully for over 21 years. Our influence in knowledge transfer includes areas such as successful project management, maximising citizen involvement and urban forest education”, says Clive Davies, Chair of EFUF international steering group.

Cologne is a very suitable location to address the topic of urban forestry: The urban planning situation of the Rhine city began in the 1920s and was shaped by its fortress conditions, which was then converted to a green belt and became a remarkable landmark of Cologne. The orientation towards the urban green system led to reforestations being largely systematic and starting where forests made it possible to expand existing green spaces. Today, with a forest area of 4,000 ha, Cologne is one of the largest municipal forest owners in North Rhine-Westphalia. The participants experience and discuss how the City of Cologne is managing these forest areas in collaboration with citizens and forest users.

The participants will also visit the innovative Forest Laboratory of Cologne (Waldlabor). The Waldlabor provides new insights on what forests of the future will look like. The City of Cologne and the University of Aachen use the Waldlabor to test new forms of urban forest design, planning and management.

“Over 150 experts from 30 countries globally come to Cologne to learn from the remarkably work that the City of Cologne and the University in Aachen...
have been doing in the field of urban forestry. They will not only learn from the experiences in Cologne, but also from experiences from colleagues throughout Europe and the rest of the world. The participants will learn from the knowledge by the German Sport University Cologne on tapping into the many great opportunities that urban green spaces provide for urban citizens’ health through providing opportunities for sports and recreation in a green landscape”, says Dr Rik De Vreese, urban forestry expert at the European Forest Institute (EFI) and executive officer for the conference.

The conference will be organised by the Bonn Office of the European Forest Institute, in collaboration with German Sport University Cologne, the City of Cologne, and the University of Aachen. The conference is financially supported by the Ministry for Environment, Agriculture, Nature and Consumer Protection of the Federate State of North Rhine-Westphalia.